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ABSTRACT

Information on current trends and issues in English instruction, compiled by directors of the following National Council of Teachers of English groups, is presented in this report: Commission on Composition (Charles Schuster); Commission on the English Curriculum (Eileen Lundy); Commission on the English Language (James C. Stalker); Commission on Literature (Darwin T. Turner); Commission on Media (David A. England); Commission on Reading (Dorothy J. Watson); and Standing Committee Against Censorship (John M. Kean). Some of the topics discussed include curricular matters, teacher training, computer assisted instruction, academic partnership arrangements between colleges and high schools, legislative mandates, the disappearance of texts in classrooms, the dangerous circularity inherent in the "effective schools" research and modeling, the "whole language" concept, developments in the area of bilingual education, the place of literature in the English curriculum, teachers' lack of discrimination in the selection of literary works, the effect of budgetary restraints on the teaching of literature, the integration of all the media into the language arts curriculum, reading materials that do not respond to the needs of students, reliance on standardized testing, the Hatch Amendment, and pornography. (EL)

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Trends and Issues in English Instruction, 1986--Seven Summaries

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Trends and Issues Reports, 1986
National Council or Teachers or English Commissions

Commission on Composition
(Charles Schuster, Director)

The Commission on Composition discussed a wide range of trends and issues at its November, 1985 meeting. Members expressed considerable concern about curricular matters: the effect that "scope and sequence" curricula will have on writing and instruction; the importance of teaching writing as a "life skill" as well as an activity that essentially defines the thinking, creating human being; a distinct bias against composition programs at any level that focus largely and/or exclusively on the five paragraph theme and other formulaic approaches to composition; even the effect that the physical setting of the classroom (class size, configuration of tables and desks, availability of typewriters and other writing materials, etc.) has upon writing instruction. Too often, Commission members felt, the writing classroom is not a place conducive to the very activity that is being taught.

Commission members worried that there was an increasing national trend toward a more conservative curriculum, with an unfortunate renewed emphasis on grammar instruction, drill, workbooks, and minimal correction made at the expense of fluency, experimentation, and growth through expressive and exploratory forms of writing. Members were cautious about CAI (computer-assisted instruction) in this regard, noting that many CAI programs are, at this stage, nothing more than electronic workbooks on usage and grammar. We also expressed concern about privacy issues, the lack of good

software, and the glorification of machine teaching. All agreed, however, that this was an area of strong interest in composition. We applauded the increasing attention being paid to reading/writing connections as well as those between literature/composition and speaking/writing. Everyone agreed that other disciplines need to be appraised of the uses and virtues of writing, and a proposal was made to get NCTE members more actively involved in the professional meetings of historians, biologists, political scientists, etc. in order to talk about the power of writing as a way of learning.

Teaching and the training of teachers also drew Commission members' attention. We decried the incresing emphasis on proficiency testing, with its emphasis on minimal standards and one-time, sixty-minute performance. Testing has its benefits, but we felt NCTE members should take an active role in the political battles being waged over testing in so many states. We worried that too many teachers are insufficiently trained to teach composition, although it seems that more college teachers are being trained now than previously. We were pleased by the increasing number of programs that encourage teachers to be researchers, and we were heartened by the number of teachers who were writing--and publishing--about their classroom ideas and experiences. We felt that training about the teaching of writing should become more a focus in writing programs, in English and English-Education departments, and at MLA regional meetings as well as others.

One of our major concerns was for basic writers, minorities, ESL students and the urban population. Our consensus was that the writing abilities of these students is not improving, and that teachers, researchers, and professional organizations need to focus increasing attention on the complex factors affecting basic writing instruction. More and better work has to be done in the areas of remedial textbooks, the scope and nature of remedial education, rewards for teachers in this challenging area, etc. We voiced strong concern that the upsurge in "tracking" at the public school level could not help but have a seriously negative impact on most of these students.

The Commission indicated some concern that "academic partnership" arrangements between colleges and high schools can prove unsatisfactory because of a dictatorial attitude on the part of the college. We were also concerned that too much of the budget in such programs can be eaten up by bureaucratic costs. At the same time, members expressed strong commitment for continued articulation between high schools and colleges. We also noted the increasing emphasis on business and technical writing, particularly at the college level. We worried that these specialists are becoming separated from their colleagues in English Departments and in NCTE and hoped that we could cement a working relationship between composition and business and technical writing before the latter went the way of Linguistics and Speech.

Finally, we expressed some mega-concerns about the profession of teaching. Too often, we agreed, teachers--particularly teachers of writing--are held in extremely low esteem. Often teachers are caught in the clash between conservative community values and humanist school values which result in battles over censorship,

freedom of expression, and curriculum. We worried that teachers have few political resources at their disposal with which to wage crucial battles about class size, curricular emphases, the necessity of teaching writing along the wide spectrum of aims and modes of discourse, etc. We worried particularly about the low status of part-time teachers, who have become a new breed of intellectual migrant workers, especially in high schools and colleges. We voiced concern about the lack of status given to college composition teachers, with the poor wage scales, lack of promotion, and tenure denial that often result. The Commission is working currently on a book-length collection of essays that it hopes will address these issues.

Commission on the English Curriculum
(Eileen Lundy, Director)

The Commission on the English Curriculum identified the following trends and issues in English Language Arts education at this time:

1) LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

The most frequently mentioned issue during our discussions and the issue with the strongest relationships to other issues was that of the growing number of state and local legislative mandates designed to upgrade education, but in fact, resulting in negative effects on teachers, students and curriculum at all levels.

a) TESTING

An emphasis on "objective" forms of testing tend to narrow the choices of content and methodology open to educators, resulting in an emphasis on fragmented and often trivial material. This testing emphasis affects curricula for students at all educational levels.

b) CURRICULUM DESIGN

A trend toward uniformity in curriculum design by state-level legislation has taken curriculum-choices out of the hands of those closest to the students and those best prepared to select material and plan instruction.

c) INCENTIVE PLANS

Merit pay and "career ladder" programs based on criteria tangential to effective teaching reflect a fear to exercise informed judgment and often result in the defeat of the purpose for which they were designed: rewarding excellent teaching.

This issue points to the need for English educators to begin to speak more clearly, more effectively, more thoroughly, and more persistently to the general public, to legislators, to members of school boards, to parents and to state agency officials and

administrators. We must begin to use the channels of communication outside our usual professional publications: public service television and radio, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, etc.

To supply English educators with the necessary information and with a compilation of current research, two types of publications by NCTE might well be considered:

a) a publication or series of publications of exemplary curricular designs with case studies of the processes that produced those designs. It is the latter part of this suggestion that is the most valuable. The first part offers a fish; the second shows how to fish.

b) a publication or position paper on the state of the art in English curriculum in the United States. Preferably, this would be a major study similar to Applebee's study of secondary writing education in the U.S.

Several emerging trends promise counter-efforts to the negative effects of current legislation. Faculty in some areas are becoming more actively involved in curriculum design. The idea of teacher-researchers continues with some promise of growth. Experimentation with teacher-incentive plans and grants may yield more effective and truer measures of teaching excellence.

2) RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

A second trend of major importance identified by our commission is a positive one: the trend to incorporate into the teaching and reading of literature the knowledge gained from reader-response criticism and from current research into the nature of the reading process. Investigations into the relationship of text, reader, author and authority have yielded insights valuable to English educators.

Related to this trend, but not caused by it, is the topic of a core curriculum in literature. Raised anew by E. D. Hirsch and limited by Bennett, the idea of a set group of literary texts to be read by all students has become an attractive if simplistic answer to the question of how to pass on our literary heritage. The simplistic quality of that proposal masks the troubling questions within it: who chooses the texts to be read? what criteria should mark the texts chosen for which students and by what process? what do we do with our knowledge of the relation of text to reader to author with the implications for aesthetic preferences that flow from that knowledge? This is another issue demanding our professional attention and our public voice.

3) TEACHER EDUCATION

As teacher-certification programs increase the number of credit hours in pedagogy and related projects, the number of required credit hours in content areas continues to decrease for prospective teachers, especially prospective elementary teachers. It is possible even now in some areas for prospective elementary teachers to graduate with nothing but pedagogy-related courses in their upper-division course work

in college. This trend may now be spreading to the preparation of secondary teachers. Add to this the disappearance of texts in classrooms (see Trend #5 in this report) and we witness a generation of teachers entering our classrooms less well-read and more narrowly educated than ever before. With the average age of English teachers increasing, we see also a trend toward retrenchment with teachers less interested in current research and development and the resulting challenges to innovate.

4) DECLINE IN INTEREST

Two trends show a decline of interest on the part of those most influential in effecting changes in these areas: a concern about heavy teaching loads and a concern about meeting the needs of adult basic learners. Surprisingly, in the general push for educational reform now in progress nationally, the questions of teaching loads and class size have not become major items of discussion and investigation. The coming NCTE publication on class size should supply material for such discussions in the future. A similar review of research on teaching loads with support for continuing research in this area should be promoted.

As basic English courses for students in four-year colleges are canceled or relegated to the two-year colleges, several conditions result:

a) two-year colleges are faced with a redefinition of their roles

b) two-year colleges are handed an increased financial burden at a time when they are under already severe financial constraints

c) four-year colleges may witness increased numbers of drop-outs in the freshman and sopnomore years.

This cancellation of Basic English programs appears to be part of a diminishing attention to the needs of non-traditional and minority students.

5) DISAPPEARANCE OF TEXTS

Finally, an odd trend appears to be in progress in the public schools: The disappearance of texts in classrooms. The texts are being replaced by computers and software, by Xeroxed materials, by isolated chapters and brief excerpts. Writing courses taught without readings add to the phenomenon. Borrowed books from school or public libraries are disappearing from classroom bookshelves and windowsills also. For many English classrooms, the library has become primarily and, too often, exclusively, the place to find references for a research paper. The library suffers from decreasing financial support, thus weakening acquisitions and holdings as well as instructional support. Computers, while they are appearing in classrooms, are not supplying the materials books offered. Students may be reading less because they have less to read.

Commission on the English Language

(James C. Stalker, Director)

The Commission applauds the publication of the first volume of the Dictionary of American Regional English, a major addition to reference works on the American language. We look forward with eager anticipation to the publication of the remaining volumes. The Commission is also pleased to see that collaborative research in the classroom continues, and we would like the Council to support such research.

Two new areas of concern are evident to the Commission. The first, which the Commission feels should be acted on by the Council, is the dangerous cirularity inherent in the "effective schools" research and modeling. An "effective school" is one whose students do well on standardized tests, therefore an "ineffective" school is one whose students do poorly on standardized tests. This definition assumes that standardized tests are the best measures of success and that research should focus on how to achieve successful performance on standardized tests, which will lead to a further deification of standardized tests and an even greater fragmentation of the curriculum. The second new concern is that the requirement of the Texas Education Agency that textbooks must teach the competencies tested by Texas will further focus curricula on test preparation rather than on teaching.

The Commission remains alert to the potentials and dangers of the computer in the English classroom. It can be imaginatively used for language research or unimaginatively for grammar drill work. The latter is, unfortunately, a very likely possibility because both teachers and public still regard the teaching of English as the teaching of correctness rules, rules which are easily programmed

into electronic worksheets. A correctness and drill approach to language is fostered by the continued use of formal tests as the sole basis for the placement, retention, promotion, and evaluation of students, a trend which the Commission perceives as continuing and strengthening. For example, writing competency tests too frequently encourage the teacher to reduce writing to a list of trivial, correctness oriented "dos" and "don'ts." Such competency tests also foster the demand for a common curriculum which does not take account or advantage of the linguistic diversity which often appears in the classroom. The Commission continues to see the lessening of a focus on the development of oral language facility in the classroom. In sum, the popular definition of what constitutes "quality" education is in serious need of revision, a revision which is made the more difficult by the recent spate of national reports on the state of public education.

Although there seems little to be done about it, the Commission is distressed by the corruption and dilution of the"whole language" concept, and we continue to believe that although cross-disciplinary research can be enormously valuable, it must be done with care.

Finally, the Commission continues to be concerned with the developments in the area of bilingual education. There are a great many misconceptions about what bilingual education is and what kind of research needs to be done. The problem will only grow more acute.

Commission on Literature

(Darwin T. Turner, Director)

As in the previous year, the Commission on Literature found more negative than positive trends and issues in the teaching of literature. This year, however, the Commission expressed uncertainty about one issue and one trend; that is, the Commission saw possible positive values but feared that these would be outweighed by negative ones.

Positive

1. The only development in 1985 that members of the Commission unanimously agreed was positive was NCTE's increased attention to literature in recent issues of its professional journals and in the sessions of the 1985 annual convention. Members stated that letters should be sent to the editors of journals and to the chairs of the 1985 and 1986 Program Committees expressing appreciation for this increased attention and hoping that it would be continued.

2. One member of the Commission suggested that a positive sign may be found in the efforts of some schools in the Northeast to return to a more balanced English curriculum, which will emphasize literature--in addition to writing and speaking--as an important component of the discipline.

3. The Commission viewed as an on-going trend the fact that teachers and students reveal a lack of critical skills for reading literature. Teachers, it was asserted, have not made full use of literary theory in their classroom instruction. Students often show little knowledge of the basic terminology used in analyses of literature.

4. The Commission identified, as another alarming trend, teachers' lack of discrimination in the selection of works--especially literature for adolescents--chosen for concentrated literary study. That is, "in order to interest students, many teachers give excessive attention to authors who write materials that are relevant to the interest of adolescents, but that do not challenge the students to read, think, or analyze critically. Thus, teachers suggest that this is the most important kind of literature as they spend valuable classroom time analyzing works that students should be able to understand without the assistance of a teacher.

5. Once again, the Commission deplored the trend in classrooms to substitute the visual experience (film, videotape) for the experience in reading literary works. Obviously, when teachers themselves encourage students to consider a film a satisfactory substitute for a book, students cannot be expected to discover the unique pleasure of reading literature.

6. Once again, Commission members noted with concern the decline in the number of trade publishers or trade divisions of publishers among the exhibitors at the annual convention. By their failure to exhibit, publishers seem to reveal their presumption that members of NCTE are interested only in anthologies and in textbooks on reading, composition, and language, not in literary works.

7. Commission members expressed major concern about the rapidly expanding effect of budgetary restraints on the teaching of literature. As budgets are cut, schools restrict their library purchases and eliminate supplementary texts. These cuts not only limit the range of literary works available to students but also compel teachers to depend upon the literary choices made by editors of the anthologies selected as textbooks.

8. The Commission examined an issue that it hopes will not become a trend--the separation of some English departments into composition departments and literature departments. In many colleges, linguists and reading teachers already have separated themselves from English departments; in other colleges, literature teachers wish to relieve themselves of the responsibilities of teaching students to write effectively and to appreciate effective writing. Now this fragmentation is manifesting itself on the high school level. If this issue becomes a trend, there is not only a danger that literature departments will be perceived as a frill that should receive less money than the more "practical" composition departments; there is a more serious danger that students will not learn that the study of literature requires a knowledge of the skills mastered through a study of reading, language, and writing.

9. Finally, the Commission again expressed its concern that schoolboards and others addressing educational issues seem to exclude literature from a definition of "basics" when they insist that American education can improve only by returning to the "basics."

10. The Commission members also expressed fears about the trend toward national testing of competency in literature. Aware that their effectiveness as teachers may be evaluated according to their students' performances on these tests, many teachers (coerced by their states)--may begin to emphasize the teaching of names and familiarity with items rather than to continue to promote a love and understanding of literature.

Uncertain

1. The Commission observed that a codicil to the demand for a return to the "basics" is a demand for a core or canon of literary study. Commission members examined this trend with concern, unable to judge at this moment whether the results will prove beneficial or damaging. If such a core or canon were to be created by knowledgeable, thoughtful scholars sensitive to America's pluralistic culture and if such a core or canon were to constitute only a limited percentage of the selections in a literary curriculum, it might offer students a structure for their study of literature, and it might provide students and faculty with a commonality of experience. Such might be possible in the "core curriculum" proposed by the California Compliance Committee that, a Commission member explained, intends to assure attention to minorities. If, on the other hand, the core is myopically perceived as an entire curriculum of white males' works identified as "classics" by other white males, the concept of a core becomes little more than an effort to turn back to an era when American education gave mouth-honor but little recognition to America's pluralistic culture. Such a negative force would limit the diversity of materials for classrooms, would suppress the creativity of teachers, and

would persuade publishers to ignore literary works that were not part of the core. In conclusion, some Commission members hoped that the trend toward a "core" curriculum in literature might be beneficial, but most feared it would prove negative.

2. An issue about which the Commission expressed its uncertainty is the proposed National Assessment Test in literature for high school juniors. One member expressed a belief that the test will promote a greater interest in literature. Most members, however, argued that the test will not diminish the school's emphasis on composition rather than literature. Some members suspected that the test may be unfair if a majority of items are based on the British literature that many American high school students do not study until the senior year.

Commission on Media
(David A. England, Director)

Most trends and issues identified by the Media Commission could be placed in one of the following broad categories: access to technologies and to their "products"; ways technologies are or should be used in schools; and the media education of teachers.

Three continuing concerns regarding access were discussed. The potential censorship of film and video remains an issue for educators. In a similarly legalistic vein, the lack of clarity and consistent practice in off-air taping procedures and policies continues. A topic given greater discussion, however, related to access students have to media technology. Concern was expressed that experience with technology, especially computers, was unequal both between schools and within a given school. An area of

emerging interest is the development of "video libraries," noted as the Commission contemplated the implications of vast storehouses of information and art now being developed and retained on disc and tape. Whether the potential to draw upon these new and increasingly accessible ways to retain both art and information will be acknowledged by educators, will be an issue for future consideration.

School uses and application of the media suggested the continuing concern for greater integration of all the media into the language arts curriculum. This concern is, of course, perennial. The moral and ethical issues with which the new media confront educators were discussed. Such emerging issues as software piracy, confidentiality of records, and computer-kept and computer-generated information concerning the life of individual citizens were of concern. The emerging interactive capabilities of video and computer technologies were discussed as issues worthy of future consideration.

Two continuing concerns regarding teacher education and certification were identified. They were (1) the need for media-related teacher education courses and training; and (2) the need for state teacher certification standards and guidelines which are consistent with contemporary information environments. An emerging concern was related to teacher education: How can media educators form a national network which achieves the efficiency and effectiveness of the in-service model utilized by the National Writing Project?

Four additional trends and issues were identified. Teacher evaluation procedures which reflect the importance of media in instruction were discussed as an emerging concern. The possibility of a certain stagnation and standardization of computer applications in English--as reflected in recent conference programs--was identified as an emerging issue. In this regard, the somewhat exclusive attention to word processing and composition when computers are discussed by English and language arts teachers was noted. A continuing interest in and concern for ways business and industry can link with, inform, support, and reinforce the efforts of public schools media education was discussed.

Finally, declining commitment to humanistic education was considered in terms of how the media used and studied in the schools will either contribute to or detract from a humanities-based curriculum in English and language arts.

Commission on Reading
(Dorothy J. Watson, Director)

Information concerning the teaching and learning of reading is reaching the general public, legislators, and educators with increasing frequency. Much of that informational material (for example, Ann Landers columns and a full page ad paid for by Readers' Digest appearing in the New York Times and other newspapers) is replete with truths and half-truths, information and misinformation, frustrating ambiguity and glaring omissions. The problem is not new, but with the publication of Becoming a Nation of Readers the Commission on Reading feels that the trend must be addressed. Specifically, the Commission believes that Becoming a

Nation of Readers is an important, but profoundly flawed document that has the potential of influencing reading curriculum and instruction across the country--perhaps around the world; therefore, a response stemming from sociopsycholinguistic research and theory must be presented through both professional literature and through public media. It is hoped that such a response will influence the opinions and beliefs of the general public and of those who govern public education.

The persistent issue of materials that do not respond to the needs of students, are supported by theoretically unsound an developmentally inappropriate information, and ignore what we know about how individuals become proficient and efficient users of oral and written language emerged again. In response to the issue the Commission proposed a book concerning basal readers. The manuscript will address other articulated issues: the knowledge base of reading and reading instruction, a critique of basals, what professionals can do to initiate and implement change, and ways of challenging publishers.

The issue of reliance on standardized testing to judge student achievement, teacher ability, and the quality of education going on in classrooms once again emerged. Another example of test dependency: Currently twenty-eight states require prospective teachers to take the National Teaching Examination. Each state sets its own cut-off scores. The failure rates of minorities are alarming as are the relationships between performance on the Professional Knowledge section of the exam and "good" teaching. Another example of assessment misuse: Assessing whole language programs, students, and teachers on the basis of "skills" measurements.

The socio-ethnic barriers to full participation in the society was an issue that surfaced again and again in the deliberations of the Commission. The fragmentation of all language teaching and testing works against the natural intent of all learners to unify and connect what is splintered and disconnected; it is most damaging to those whose lives are marked by societal alienation, whose need to have a sense of the whole is most acute. For many nonwhite learners there is a chasm of difference between life at home, in the streets, and life in the classroom. The resulting dissonance distracts them from the effort to learn. The teachers'/systems's consequent negative appraisal of their potential confirms the alienation and the failure. The black community is underrepresented in the teaching profession (especially in the teaching of English, though not in reading programs where fragmentation is often at work). The dangerous consequences are incredibly far-reaching.

Other issues and trends concerning members of the Commission have to do with (1) the evolution of microcomputers as related to reading and writing, (2) adult literacy programs, (3) models for teacher change (including teacher support groups), (4) federal movements such as the Hatch Amendment that make it possible to challenge (on the pretext of the "rights" of the child) any program regarded as innovative, (5) the substitution of "higher order thinking skills" programs for authentic reading and writing and narrative building activities, and (6) the emergence of more old stuff in new packages such as teacher and school effectiveness that focus on management systems and behavior control techniques.

Standing Committee Against Censorship
(John M. Kean)

The Standing Committee Against Censorship (Jack Kean, Chair) is faced with a multitude of issues--all of which seem to need immediate attention. However, the complexity of the issues and the rapidly changing status of legal challenges to intellectual freedom have made it some what difficult to set long range priorities. For example, in 1985 the "Hatch Amendment" was used as the basis for thousands of letters sent to school districts to constrain the teaching of such diverse topics as nuclear war and morality as well as the use of journals and autobiographies. However, the Department of Education's Monika Harrison in responding to a request for interpretation from the Merrick, New York Public Schools has stated that the "Hatch Amendment neither anticipate(s) nor include(s) any authority for the Department to introduce, modify or terminate any programs or activities the district may be conducting..." (cited in "Censorship News" Winter 86, Issue 23, p. 2-3). Thus it appears that legal sanctions which the letter writers threatened will not happen. What remains, of course, is the intimidation of possibly hundreds of teachers and administrators who are unsure of either their rights or their responsibilities.

In 1985, a pending Indianapolis city ordinance which defined pornography as a form of discrimination against women was debated all over the country. On February 24, 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional.

Challenges to school material continue to increase at all levels (e.g., Gardner's Grendel in a California high school, Allerd's The Stupids Die in a Wisconsin elementary school, and secular

humanism in a Holt Rinehart and Winston Reading Series in Tennessee). College professors are being monitored by Accuracy in Academia.

Elementary and high school teachers are asking whether they should send permission slips home so that children and youth may view video tapes that may contain language or visual segments offensive to some parents. Parents are wondering whether viewing Romeo and Juliet contributes to teenage suicide. The Supreme Court is being asked to rule again on the free expression rights of high school students. The Executive Branch of the Federal Government has concluded public hearings on pornography (Meese Commission) without inviting testimony "from one single writer--not a fiction writer, a journalist, or a reporter--nor a single artistic group or any writers' organizations in the entire country--not PEN, the Writers' Guild, the Authors' League, or the American Society of Journalists and Authors," (cited in "Censorship News" Winter 86, Issue 23, p. 4). The Commission report is due in June 1986.

Intellectual freedom supporters have responded to those challenges at both the state and national levels. The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCTE is a member), and People for the American Way, among many others are stepping up their efforts to help schools, libraries, and communities challenge the censors. The Standing Committee Against Censorship believes that participation with such coalitions is extremely important and encourages all NCTE members to support them.

In the meantime, the members of the Standing Committee Against Censorship are working with coalitions at all levels, devising

ways to help teachers prepare strong rationales for the material they teach, providing individual help and referral services for teachers who are facing challenges, and sharing information about censorship with all who are interested. The committee is sponsoring a one day workshop on censorship and ways to defend against it at the San Antonio meeting in November 1986.

The committee encourages all NCTE members to keep the committee informed about censorship challenges. It would also appreciate suggestions about ways that it can better meet the needs of English teachers. The committee in interested in working with regional and state affiliates who want to hold meetings on issues related to intellectual freedom or who wish to undertake other projects related to intellectual freedom.

During the next four years, the United States will be celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. The Constitution was completed in September 1787 and ratified by the states by May of 1790. The Bill of Rights became effective in December of 1791. The committee encourages affiliates to sponsor meetings related to the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights. This might be an appropriate time to co-sponsor meetings with state humanities committees and state social studies teachers around this topic.